



THE METHOD OF OPERATION¹

WITH the accession of Mr. William Henry Smith to the office of general manager of the Associated Press, less than twenty-five years ago, there came a change for the better in the administration. The Western papers which had been admitted to a share in the management demanded more enterprise and a report of more varied character. The policy of limiting the field to "routine news"—sport, markets, shipping, etc.—was abandoned, and the institution began to show evidences of real journalistic life and ability. It startled the newspaper world by occasionally offering exclusive and well-written items of general interest. When Mr. Blaine was closing what promised to be a successful political campaign in 1884, it was an Associated Press man who shattered all precedents, as well as the candidate's hopes, by reporting Dr. Burchard's disastrous "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion" speech. This was then an unheard-of display of enterprise.

Two years later, the same reporter scored again. He had been sent to Mount McGregor with many others to report General Grant's last illness. He was shrewd enough to arrange in advance with the doctor for prompt information of the final event. A system of signals had been agreed upon, and when, one day, the doctor sauntered out upon the veranda of the Drexel cottage and drew a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his hands, the reporter knew that the general was dead and telegraphed the fact throughout the world. For

months afterward it was spoken of with wonder as the Associated Press "scoop."

A MASTERPIECE OF REPORTING

THEN came the Samoan disaster, in 1885, and with it a disclosure that an Associated Press man might not only be capable of securing exclusive news, but might also be able to write it in a creditable way. Mr. John P. Dunning of the San Francisco bureau happened to be in Apia when the great storm broke over the islands. In the roadstead were anchored three American war-vessels, the *Trenton*, *Nipsic*, and *Vandalia*; three German war-ships, the *Adler*, *Olga*, and *Eber*; and the British cruiser *Calliope*. All of the American and German ships were driven upon the coral reefs and destroyed, involving the loss of one hundred and fifty lives. The *Calliope*, a more modern vessel with superior engines, was able to escape. As she pushed her way into the heavy sea, in the teeth of the hurricane, the jackies of the *Trenton* dressed ship, while her band played the British national anthem. It was a profoundly tragic salutation from those about to die.

Mr. Dunning's graphic story, which will long be accepted as a masterpiece of descriptive literature, was mailed to San Francisco, and a month later was published by the newspapers of the Associated Press. It was a revelation to those who had long believed the organization incapable of producing anything more exciting

¹ See other papers in this group by Mr. Stone in *THE CENTURY* for April, May, and June.

than a market quotation. It was also an inspiration to those who were to succeed Mr. Smith in the administration of the business. It revealed the possibilities in store for the association.

In the earlier days telegraphic facilities were so limited and the cost of messages was so great that it was necessary to report everything in the briefest form. It was enough that the facts were disclosed, and little heed was paid to the manner of presentation. Moreover, a great majority of those writing the despatches were telegraph operators, destitute of literary training.

The advantages of an Associated Press newspaper were very great. It was scarcely possible for a competitor to make headway against the obstacles which he was compelled to face. Not only was the burden of expense enormous, but the telegraph company which was in close alliance with the association frequently delayed his service, or refused to transmit it at any price. It followed that the quantity of news which an editor was able to furnish his readers became the measure of his enterprise and ability. It was his proudest boast that his paper printed "all the news." James Gordon Bennett, Sr., of the New York "Herald," and Wilbur F. Storey of the Chicago "Times," set the pace, and won much fame by lavish expenditures for telegrams, which were often badly written.

A NEW STANDARD OF NEWS-GATHERING

As new cables were laid, and land wires were extended, and rival telegraph companies appeared, the cost of messages was reduced, and there came a demand for better writing and better editing. The hour for selection in news had arrived. It was obvious that no editor could any longer print all the information offered him, and it was equally evident that the reader, whose range of vision had been surprisingly widened by the modern means of communication, had neither time nor inclination to read it all. Editors who could and would edit were required. Newspapers presenting a carefully prepared perspective of the day's history of the world were needed.

Thus was clearly outlined the path along which the Associated Press must travel. Its resources were unlimited. Through its foreign alliances, it had a representative at every point of interest abroad; and,

through its own membership, it was able to cover every part of the United States. It was only necessary to organize, educate, and utilize these forces. Strong men, specially trained for the work in hand, must be chosen, and stationed at strategic points. The ordinary correspondent would not do; indeed, as a rule, he of all men was least fitted for Associated Press work. Writing for a single newspaper, he might follow the editorial bias of his journal; and even though he was inexact, his statements were likely to pass unchallenged. In writing for the Associated Press any departure from strict accuracy and impartiality was certain to be discovered.

But the strategic points were not the only ones to be looked after. News of the highest importance, requiring for its proper treatment the best literary skill, was sure to develop in the most remote quarters. To find men in these out-of-the-way spots, imbued with the American idea of journalistic enterprise, and qualified to see an event in its proper proportions and to describe it adequately and vividly, was a serious undertaking. Yet the thing must be done, if the ideal service was to be reached.

THE BEST REPORTERS FOUND IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

WITHIN the limits of the United States, the task was a comparatively easy one. Here men of the required character were obtainable. It was only necessary to select them with care and to drill them to promptness, scrupulous accuracy, impartiality, and a graphic style. So wide-spread is American education that it was soon discovered that the best men could usually be found in the villages and the smaller cities. They were more sincere, better informed, and less "bumptious" than the journalistic Gascons so frequently employed on the metropolitan press.

For the foreign field, greater obstacles were presented. Our methods were not European methods, and the Europeans were not news-mad peoples. At the best, the contributions of any news-agency to the columns of any foreign newspaper were exceedingly limited and prosaic. This is particularly true upon the Continent, where the journals devote themselves chiefly to well-written political leaders and *feuilletons*, and where news has a distinctly secondary place.

I took up the subject with the chiefs of the foreign agencies. Fortunately, in Baron Herbert de Reuter, head of the great company which bears his name, I found a sympathetic ally. During twelve years of intimate intercourse with him, he has shown at all times journalistic qualities of a very high order. A man of brilliant intellect, scholarly, modest, having a keen sense of the immense responsibility of his office, but of nervous temperament and tireless energy, he has shared every impulse to reach a higher level of excellence in the service. With his coöperation and that of Dr. Mantler, chief of the German agency, a zealous and efficient manager, but lacking the encouragement and stimulus of a news-reading and news-demanding public, substantial progress was made. The object desired was a correct perspective of the daily history of the world.

The end could not be reached at a single bound. Long-continued effort and the exercise of no small degree of patience were necessary. What has been done may perhaps best be illustrated by a few examples. When Mr. Chamberlain resigned from Mr. Balfour's ministry two years ago, it was the Associated Press in London which gave this news to the world; and when the Alaskan Commission was summoned to meet in London in the autumn of 1903, the keenest interest in its deliberations was manifested in both countries, and the efforts of the Associated Press were naturally bent on keeping its readers fully informed of the deliberations of the commission. A few minutes after the final decision of the commission was reached, one Saturday evening, it had been flashed across the Atlantic. No official confirmation of this fact was obtainable in England until the meeting of the commission on Monday; but so implicit was the confidence felt in the news which had been published in America by the Associated Press that the English papers accepted its statements as true.

THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT • MCKINLEY

On the afternoon of September 6, 1901, worn out by a long period of exacting labor, I set out for Philadelphia, with the purpose of spending a few days at Atlantic City. When I reached the Broad-street

station in the Quaker City, I was startled by a number of policemen crying my name. I stepped up to one, who pointed to a boy with an urgent message for me. President McKinley had been shot at Buffalo, and my presence was required at our Philadelphia office at once. A message had been sent to me at Trenton, but my train had left the station precisely two minutes ahead of its arrival. Handing my baggage to a hotel porter, I jumped into a cab and dashed away to our office. I remained there until dawn of the following morning.

The opening pages of the story of the assassination were badly written, and I ordered a substitute prepared. An inexperienced reporter stood beside President McKinley in the Music-hall at Buffalo when Czolgosz fired the fatal shot. He seized a neighboring telephone and notified our Buffalo correspondent, and then pulled out the wires, in order to render the telephone a wreck, so that it was a full half-hour before any additional details could be secured.

I ordered competent men and expert telegraph operators from Washington, Albany, New York, and Boston to hurry to Buffalo by the fastest trains. All that night the Buffalo office was pouring forth a hastily written, but faithful and complete account of the tragedy, and by daybreak a relief force was on the ground. Day by day, through the long vigil while the President's life hung in the balance, each incident was truthfully and graphically reported. In the closing hours of the great tragedy false reports of the President's death were circulated for the purpose of influencing the stock-market, and, to counteract them, Secretary Cortelyou wrote frequent signed statements, giving the facts to the Associated Press.

THE MARTINIQUE DISASTER

On the night of May 3, 1902, a brief telegram from St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, reported that Mont Pelée, the volcano on the island of Martinique, was in eruption, and that the town of St. Pierre was enveloped in a fog and covered with ashes an inch deep. Cable communication was cut off. The following morning I set about securing the facts. We had two correspondents on the island, one at St. Pierre and the other at Fort de France,

nine miles away; but clearly neither of these could be reached.

Fortunately, investigation disclosed that an old friend, a talented newspaper man, was the United States consul at Guadeloupe, an island only twelve hours distant. I instantly appealed to the State Department at Washington to give him a leave of absence, and, when this was granted, I cabled him to charter a boat and go to St. Pierre at once, and secure and transmit an adequate report. The Associated Press men at St. Vincent, St. Thomas, Porto Rico, Barbados, Trinidad, and St. Lucia were instructed to hurry forward any information that might reach them, and to endeavor to get to Martinique by any available means. St. Thomas alone was able to respond with a short telegram, three days later, announcing the destruction of the Martinique sugar-factories, which were only two miles distant from St. Pierre. The despatch also reported the loss of one hundred and fifty lives, and the existence of a panic at St. Pierre because of the condition of the volcano, which was now in full eruption and threatening everything on the island. Mr. Aymé, the consul at Guadeloupe, found difficulty in chartering a boat, but finally succeeded, and, after a thrilling and dangerous night run through a thick cloud of falling ashes and cinders, arrived before the ill-fated city. The appalling character of the catastrophe was then disclosed. Thirty thousand people, the population of the town, had been buried under a mass of hot ashes; one single human being had escaped. It was enough to make the stoutest heart grow faint.

But Aymé was a trained reporter, inured by long experience to trying scenes; and he set to work promptly to meet the responsibility which had been laid upon him. Our St. Pierre man had gone to his death on the common pyre, but Mr. Ivanès, the Associated Press correspondent at Fort de France, survived. With him Mr. Aymé joined effort, and, with great courage and at serious risk, they went over the blazing field and gathered the gruesome details of the disaster. Then Mr. Aymé wrote his story, returned to the cable-station at Guadeloupe, and sent it. It was a splendid piece of work, worthy of the younger Pliny, whose story of a like calamity at Pompeii has come down to us through two thousand years. It filled a page of the Ameri-

can newspapers on the morning of May 11, and was telegraphed to Europe. It was the first adequate account given to the world.

Mr. Aymé returned to Martinique and spent three weeks in further investigation, leaving his post of duty only when the last shred of information had been obtained and transmitted. As a result of his terrible experience, his health was impaired, and, although he was given a prolonged leave of absence, he has never recovered. It cost the Associated Press over \$30,000 to report this event.

THE DEATH OF POPE LEO XIII

THE illness and death of the late Pope constituted another event which called for news-gathering ability of a high order. Preparations had been made long in advance. Conferences were held with the Italian officials and with the authorities at the Vatican, all looking to the establishment of relations of such intimacy as to guarantee us the news. We had been notified by the Italian Minister of Telegraphs that, because of the strained relations existing between his government and the papal court, he should forbid the transmission of any telegrams announcing the Pope's death for two hours after the fatal moment, in order that Cardinal Rampolla might first notify the papal representatives in foreign countries. This was done as a gracious act of courtesy to the church.

To meet the emergency, we arranged a code message to be sent by all cable-lines, which should be addressed, not to the Associated Press, but to the general manager in person, and should read: "Number of missing bond, ——. (Signed) Montefiore." This bore on its face no reference to the death of the Pontiff, and would be transmitted. The blank was to be filled with the hour and moment of the Pope's death, reversed. That is, if he died at 2:53, the message would read: "Melstone, New York. Number of missing bond, 352. (Signed) Montefiore." The object of reversing the figures was, of course, to prevent a guess that it was a deception in order to convey the news. If the hour had been properly written, they might have suspected the purport of the message.

When, finally, the Pope died, although his bed was completely surrounded by burning candles, an attendant hurried from

the room into an anteroom and called for a candle to pass before the lips of the dying man, to determine whether he still breathed. This was the signal for another attaché, who stepped to the telephone and announced to our correspondent, two miles away, that the Pope was dead. Unfortunately, the hour of his death was four minutes past four, so that whichever way it was written, whether directly or the reverse, it was 404.

Nevertheless, the figures were inserted in the blank in the bulletin which had been prepared, it was filed with the telegraph company, and it came through to New York in exactly nine minutes from the moment of death. It was relayed at Havre, and again at the terminal of the French Cable Company in New York, whence it came to our office on a short wire. The receiving operator there shouted the news to the entire operating-room of the Associated Press, and every man on every key on every circuit out of New York flashed the announcement that the Pope had died at four minutes past four; so that the fact was known in San Francisco within eleven minutes after its actual occurrence.

The Reuter, Havas, and Wolff agents located in our office in New York retransmitted the announcement to London, Paris, and Berlin, giving those cities their first news of the event. A comparison of the report of the London "Times" with that of any morning paper in the United States on the day following the death of the Pope would show that, both as to quantity and quality, our report was vastly superior. The London "Times" had a column and a half; the New York "Times" had a page of the graphic story of the scenes in and about the Vatican. The New York "Times" story was ours. This was so notable an event that it occasioned comment throughout the world.

During the illness of the Pope I ordered a number of the best men from our London, Paris, and Vienna offices to Rome to assist our resident men. The advantage of such an arrangement was that the London men were in close touch with church dignitaries of England, while our representatives from France and Vienna had their immediate circle of acquaintances among the church dignitaries of those countries. The result was that Mr. Cortesi, the chief of our Roman office, was per-

fectly familiar with the local surroundings and was on intimate terms with Drs. Laponi and Mazzoni of the Vatican, as well as with the other resident officials of the church, and was always able to command attention from them. Besides, he had not only the advantage of the assistance of trained men from our other European offices, but he had also the advantage of their acquaintance. We were enabled day by day to present an extraordinary picture of the scenes at the Vatican, and day by day the bulletins upon the condition of the Holy Father were transmitted with amazing rapidity. The death-bed scenes at Buffalo, when President McKinley was lying ill at the Milburn house, were reported with no greater degree of promptness and no greater detail. The funeral scenes were also covered in a remarkably ample way, and with astounding rapidity. Then came the conclave for the election of a new pope. It was to be secret, and every effort was made to prevent its proceedings from becoming public. A brick wall was constructed about the hall to prevent any one having access to it. But, to the amazement of every one, the Associated Press had a daily report of all that happened. One of the members of the Noble Guard was an Associated Press man. Knowing the devotion of the average Italian for the dove, he took with him into the conclave chamber his pet dove, which was a homing pigeon trained to go to our office. But Cardinal Rampolla could not be deceived: he ordered the pigeon killed. Other plans, however, were more successful. Laundry lists sent out with the soiled linen of a cardinal, and a physician's prescriptions sent to a pharmacy, proved to be code messages which were deciphered in our office. We were enabled not only to give a complete and accurate story of the happenings within the conclave chamber, but we announced the election of the new Pope, which occurred about 11 A.M. in Rome, so promptly that, owing to the difference in time, it was printed in the morning papers of San Francisco of that day. We were also enabled to send the announcement back to Europe before it was received from Rome direct, and it was our message that was printed in all the European capitals. The Italian authorities did not interfere with these messages.

THE USE OF WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY

OF late years the international yacht races off Sandy Hook have, as a rule, been reported by wireless telegraphy. Stations have been erected on Long Island and on the coast of New Jersey, and a fast-going yacht, equipped with Marconi apparatus, has followed the racers. A running story, transmitted through the air to the coast, has been instantly relayed by land wires to the main office of the association in New York, and thence distributed over the country. Such a report of the contest costs over \$25,000.

HOW NATIONAL CONVENTIONS ARE REPORTED

"PRESIDENTIAL years" are always trying ones for the management. In 1896 the friends of Speaker Reed were incensed because we were unable to see that a majority of the delegates to the Republican National Convention were Reed men. Not that I think they really believed this; but everything is accounted fair in the game of politics, and they thought it would help their cause if the Associated Press would announce each delegation, on its selection, as for Reed. They appealed to me; but of course I could not misstate the facts, and they took great umbrage. The St. Louis Convention, when it assembled, verified our declarations, for Mr. Reed's vote was insignificant.

The national conventions are our first care. Preparations begin months before they assemble. Rooms are engaged at all the leading hotels, so that Associated Press men may be in touch with every delegation. The plans of the convention hall are examined, and arrangements are made for operating-room and seats. The wires of the association are carried into the building, and a work-room is usually located beneath the platform of the presiding officer. A private passage is cut, connecting this work-room with the reporters' chairs, which are placed directly in front of the stand occupied by speakers, and inclosed by a rail to prevent interference from the surging masses certain to congregate in the neighborhood.

A week before the convention opens, a number of Associated Press men are on the ground to report the assembling of the

delegates, to sound them as to their plans and preferences, and to indicate the trend of the gathering in their despatches as well as they may. The National Committee holds its meeting in advance of the convention, decides upon a roll of members, and names a presiding officer. All this is significant, and is often equivalent to a determination of the party candidates.

Of the convention itself, the Associated Press makes three distinct reports. A reporter sits in the hall and dictates to an operator who sends out bulletins. These follow the events instantly, are necessarily very brief, and are often used by the newspapers to post on bulletin-boards. There is also a graphic running story of the proceedings. This is written by three men, seated together, each writing for ten minutes and then resting twenty. The copy is hastily edited by a fourth man, so that it may harmonize. This report is usually printed by afternoon papers. Finally, there is a verbatim report, which is printed by the large metropolitan dailies. A corps of expert stenographers, who take turns in the work, is employed. As a delegate rises in any part of the hall, one of these stenographers dashes to his side and reports his utterances. He then rushes to the work-room and dictates his notes to a rapid type-writer, while another stenographer replaces him upon the convention floor. The nominating speeches are usually furnished by their authors weeks in advance, and are in type in the newspaper offices awaiting their delivery and release.

The men who report these conventions are drawn from all the principal offices of the Associated Press. Coming from different parts of the country, they are personally acquainted with a large majority of the delegates. There is a close division of labor: certain men are assigned to write bulletins; others to do descriptive work; still others to prepare introductory summaries; a number to watch and report the proceedings of secret committees; and a force of "scouts" to keep in close touch with the party leaders, and learn of projects the instant that they begin to mature. Out of it all comes a service which puts the newspaper reader of the country in instant and constant possession of every developing fact and gives him a pen-picture of every scene. Indeed, he has a better



From a photograph by Kuehne

FRANK B. NOVES

President of the Associated Press

From a photograph by Alman & Co.

VICTOR F. LAWSON

Former President of the Associated Press

grasp of the situation than if he were present in the convention hall.

When the candidates are named and the platforms adopted the campaign opens, and for several months the Associated Press faces steadily increasing responsibilities. The greatest care is observed to maintain an attitude of strict impartiality, and yet to miss no fact of interest. If a candidate, or one of the great party leaders, makes a "stumping journey," stenographers and descriptive writers must accompany him. While Mr. Bryan was "on tour," it was his practice to speak hurriedly from the rear platform of his train, and instantly to leave for the next appointment. While he was speaking, the Associated Press stenographer was taking notes. When the train started, these notes were dictated to a type-writer, and at the next stopping-point were handed over to a waiting local Associated Press man, who put the speech on the telegraph wires. In the general offices records are kept of the number of words sent out, so that at the end of the campaign the volume of Republican and Democratic speeches reported is expected to balance.

Finally, the work of Election Day is mapped out in advance with scrupulous care, and each correspondent in the country has definite instructions as to the part

he is to play. On Election Day brief bulletins on the condition of the weather in every part of the nation, and on the character of the voting, are furnished to the afternoon papers. The moment the polls close, the counting begins. Associated Press men everywhere are gathering precinct returns and hurrying them to county headquarters, where they are hastily added, and the totals for the county on Presidential electors are wired to the State headquarters of the association. The forces of men at these general offices are augmented by the employment of expert accountants and adding-machines from the local banks, and the labor is so subdivided that last year the result of the contest was announced by eight o'clock in the evening, and at midnight a return, virtually accurate, of the majority in every State was presented to the newspapers. It was the first occasion on which the result of an American general election was transmitted to Europe in time to appear in the London morning papers of the day succeeding the election.

GUARANTY OF IMPARTIALITY

IF I were not what Mr. Gladstone once called "an old parliamentary hand," if I had not given and taken the buffets of aggressive American journalism for many

years, and if Heaven had not blessed me with a certain measure of the saving grace of humor, I think I should have been sent to an early grave by the unreasonable and unfair attacks made upon my administration of the Associated Press news service. In the exciting Presidential campaign of 1896, Senator Jones, the Democratic national chairman, openly charged me with favoring the Republicans; while Mr. Hanna, his opponent, was at the point of breaking a long-time personal friendship because he regarded me as distinctly "pro-Bryan." The truth is, both men had lost their balance; neither was capable of a judicial view; each wanted, not an impartial service, but one which would help his side. Fortunately, the candidates preserved a better poise than their lieutenants. At the close of the campaign both Bryan and McKinley wrote me that they were impressed with the impartiality which we had observed.

A former senator of New York controlled a paper at Albany and named one of his secretaries as its editor. Then trouble began to brew. Day after day I was plied with letters charging me with unfairness. Every time we reported a speech of President Roosevelt's I was accused of favoring the Republicans, while the failure to chronicle the result of an insignificant ward caucus in New Jersey was clear evidence that I was inimical to the Democrats. I patiently investigated each complaint, and explained that there were limitations upon the volume of our service; that the utterances of any incumbent of the Presidential office must properly be reported, while the result of a ward caucus must be ignored, if we were to give any heed to their relative news values. Still the young man was not happy, and, when I had done all that reason or courtesy required, I notified the senator, who had been inspiring the criticisms, that "I must decline to walk the floor with his infant any longer." That ended the matter.

During a congressional inquiry, a number of trade-unionists appeared and testified for days in denunciation of the Associated Press, because they conceived it to be unfriendly to their cause. More recently, but with equal injustice, the secretary of the Citizens' Industrial Association has been pelting me with letters charging our association with favoring organized labor.

When we reported the death of the late Pope in a manner befitting his exalted station, a number of Methodist newspapers gravely asserted that I was a Catholic, or controlled by Vatican influences, although, as a matter of fact, my father was a Methodist clergyman and my mother the grandniece of a coadjutor of John Wesley. On the other hand, not long since, when the Associated Press reported the Marquise des Monstiers's renunciation of the Catholic faith, certain Catholic newspapers flew into a rage and asserted that I was an anti-Catholic bigot.

The more frequent criticisms, however, result from want of knowledge of the true mission of the organization. Many persons, unfamiliar with newspaper methods, mistake special telegrams for Associated Press service, and hold us to an undeserved responsibility. Many others, having "axes to grind," and quite willing to pay for the grinding, find it difficult to believe that not only does the association do no grinding, but by the very nature of its methods such grinding is made impossible. The man who would pay the Associated Press for "booming" his project would be throwing his money away. Any man in the service of the association, from the general manager to the humblest employee, who should attempt to "boom" a project would be instantly discovered, disgraced, and dismissed.

The four years' struggle with the United Press was waged over this principle. Victor F. Lawson of the Chicago "Daily News," Charles W. Knapp of the St. Louis "Republic," Frederick Driscoll of the St. Paul "Pioneer Press," and those associated with them in that contest, deserve the lasting gratitude of the American people for having established, at a vast cost of time, labor, and money, a method of news-gathering and distribution free from a chance of contamination. Seven hundred newspapers, representing every conceivable view of every public question, sit in judgment upon the Associated Press despatches. A representative of each of these papers has a vote in the election of the management. Every editor is jealously watching every line of the report. It must be obvious that any serious departure from an honest and impartial service would arouse a storm of indignation which would overwhelm any administration.